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SUBJECT: 11TH SESSION OF THE UN COMMISSION ON SCIENCE AND
TECHNOLOGY FOR DEVELOPMENT

¶1. (U) Summary: The UN Commission on Science and
Technology for Development (CSTD) held its 11th Session at
the Palais des Nations in Geneva from May 26 - 30, 2008.
The current biennial themes of the Commission are
"Development-oriented policies for a socio-economic
inclusive information society, including access,
infrastructure and an enabling environment," pertaining to
the Commission's mandate to follow-up on implementation of
the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS)
outcomes, and "Science, technology and engineering for
innovation and capacity building in education and
research," related to the original science and technology
(S&T) mandate. Discussions on these themes will conclude
next May, with results contained in a draft resolution to
the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC).

¶2. Important meeting outcomes were one resolution on WSIS
follow-up and two decisions allowing the continued
participation of non-governmental organizations and
academic entities in CSTD meetings. Negotiations on the
resolution, although difficult, resulted in a solid
document containing recommendations for action by UN
bodies and other organizations to further WSIS goals and
activities. Cuba was the most vehement opponent during
negotiations and was confrontational even in the plenary,
making two interventions condemning Northern colonialism
and openly accusing the U.S. of Internet censorship.

¶3. Productive discussions were peppered with typical
prepared statements that included laundry lists of needs
and achievements and requests for additional development
assistance. Comments from delegations included a lack of
balance pertaining to the CSTD's two mandates and the need
to explore best practices through country reports
submitted in advance of meetings. The U.S. again saw
evidence of duplication between CSTD and UNESCO,
particularly in the area of S&T and innovation policy
reviews for African nations. State Department and USAID
S&T Adviser Nina Fedoroff led the U.S. delegation,
delivering a keynote speech highlighting the importance of
broadband access for universities and research
institutions in developing countries. End Summary.

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Meeting with UNCTAD Secretary General Supachai
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¶4. Before the Session, Dr. Fedoroff had a productive
meeting with UN Conference on Trade and Development
(UNCTAD) Secretary-General (SYG) Supachai Panitchpakdi
(Supachai). (Note: the CSTD is an ECOSOC commission with
Secretariat services from UNCTAD.) SYG Supachai was very
engaged and obviously had done his homework in preparation
for their meeting, allowing him and Dr. Fedoroff to delve
into some technical topics. They discussed
genetically-modified organisms, organic farming,
addressing the global food crisis, the possibility of a
Green Revolution for Africa and the critical need to
embrace science to in all of these areas. Supachai

invited Dr. Fedoroff to consult with UNCTAD to guide them
in encouraging a scientific approach to commodities and
agricultural issues in the trade context, as well as
helping the CSTD to apply specific scientific solutions to
concrete problems (including agriculture).

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11th Session of the UN Commission on Science and
Technology for Development
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¶5. The agenda included discussions and recommendations on
WSIS follow-up and the two biennial themes, with a special
feature being discussion of UNCTAD's Science, Technology
and Innovation Policy (STIP) Review of Angola.

¶6. Important conclusions for each CSTD mandate were: 1)
the importance of sharing best practices and success
stories from developing countries in building
technological, science and engineering capacity, and 2)
 broadband technology is no longer a luxury, but an
essential component to social inclusion and development,
permitting truly global knowledge economies. An
overarching Information and Communication Technology (ICT)
related theme was the "new ICT gap" represented by
broadband.

¶7. (U) The meeting opened with high-level opening
ceremonies, including remarks from Dr. Nina Fedoroff,
Science and Technology Adviser to the United States
Secretary of State and USAID. Dr. Fedoroff reinforced the
U.S. view that the CSTD dual mandate represents an
opportunity to use ICTs to enable science and technology
to contribute to development, innovation and capacity
building She called for countries to share success
stories and best practices and to facilitate broadband
access for universities and research institutions. Her
complete remarks, on which the U.S. delegation received
numerous compliments - notably from the UNCTAD
Secretariat, the UK, El Salvador and several African
nations - are available at
www.state.gov/g/stas/2008/105625.htm.

¶8. In statements, delegations were mostly positive,
although some mentioned concern over the lack of balance
in the CSTD work program. The UK, U.S. and many
developing country representatives, notably Rwanda and
Sudan, expressed that the CSTD has become too WSIS-centric
and is neglecting its S&T mandate.

Follow-up to the WSIS

¶9. The report of the Secretary-General on progress made in
WSIS implementation was thorough, inclusive and well
balanced. It makes reasonable recommendations, including
more coordination between facilitators and more
participation by stakeholders, and concludes that WSIS
implementation is on-track.

¶10. The CSTD still has some trouble constructing balanced,
informative discussion panels. French Special Envoy for
the Information Society, Bertrand de la Chapelle's
moderation of a panel was confrontational; he insisted
that Internet access is no longer a luxury and encouraged
a more socialist approach to share existing
infrastructure. Mr. Graham Butler, President and CEO of
BITEK International Inc., a controversial figure, pushed
for strong Voice Over Internet Protocol legislation. Art
Reilly, an American and Senior Director at Cisco,
maintained balanced in both discussions by talking about
the rapid return on social and financial investment for
governments using e-government solutions and citing the
limitations that legislation would place on technological
innovation and future investment.

¶11. Internet Governance, multi-stakeholder participation,

scheduling and WSIS financing remain issues. Brazil
encouraged the UN SYG to inform the UN on the process
towards "enhanced cooperation," code for altering the
current systems for assigning Internet addresses. El
Salvador pointed out that unless the Commission took
action at this session, NGOs would no longer be able to
participate in CSTD sessions. Many NGOs spoke about the
abysmal scheduling and high expense for the plethora of
WSIS-related meetings prior to CSTD, and complained about
the lack of a WSIS financial mechanism.

CSTD Priority Themes

¶12. Both SYG reports on the CSTD themes were balanced
(note: an American UNCTAD employee penned both theme
reports). The report related to the WSIS mandate focused
on the importance of broadband infrastructure.

¶13. Several countries suggested that the CSTD should
provide templates for country reports on science and
WSIS-related activities so that meetings can be more
interactive and results-driven. Lesotho encouraged open
discussions to share best practices and lessons learned.

¶14. The Cuban delegate's intervention quickly digressed
into polemics by stating that measures are needed to
rectify U.S. blockage of Cuba's access to fiber optic
cables. She also accused the U.S. of censoring 3,000
travel websites advertising trips to Cuba and chastised
developed countries for not fulfilling commitments for
Official Development Assistance." Based on instructions,
the U.S. delegation did not intervene.

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UNCTAD's Science, Technology and Innovation Policy (STIP)
 Review for Angola
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¶15. The large Angolan delegation was led by Aguinaldo
Jaime, Deputy Prime Minister, who praised the
Secretariat's professional work and product. The STIP
recommends that Angola focus on STI-related investments in
key public sectors of education, agriculture and health,
and across-the-board measure for a better regulatory
framework to encourage investment and innovation. Many
delegations commented on the quality of the work. Brazil
intervened with a focus on south-south cooperation, saying
that it is working to build stronger ties with
Portuguese-speaking African countries to aid in their
development efforts, particularly in the agricultural
sector.

Duplication with UNESCO

¶16. UNESCO's Division for Science Policies and
Sustainable Development in Paris outlined UNESCO's
ambitious Science, Technology and Innovation Policy
Initiative for Africa. They provided a glossy brochure
and stated that the African Union (AU) has enlisted UNESCO
assistance in implementing the AU Consolidated Plan of
Action for S&T in Africa - 2008-2013. UNESCO has also
adopted three related "flagship" projects. The U.S.
Delegation urged UNESCO and UNCTAD to cooperate as much as
possible on the S&T policy reviews for Africa in light of
limited resources, common objectives, and the
complementary strengths that the two organizations can
bring to such efforts. (Comment: CSTD and UNCTAD
coordination with UNESCO on duplicative work on S&T,
particularly STIP reviews, has historically been
problematic.   U.S. has continued to insist on a "One UN"
approach whereby the two organizations strengthen
cooperation to perform reviews by complementing each
others' strengths. End Comment.)

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Outcome Documents
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¶17. A group of former WSIS players, including Latvia's
Janis Karklins, France's de la Chapelle and El Salvador's
Miguel Alcain introduced a draft resolution on WSIS
follow-up prior to the meeting, collecting advance
comments to facilitate negotiations. This draft
resolution was actually penned by Charles Geiger, former
Executive Secretariat of WSIS, currently seconded from the
Swiss Government to the UNCTAD Secretariat.

¶18. Negotiations on the draft resolution went late over
several days. Iran was particularly unconstructive, with
no apparent motive or goal. Cuba was often vehement,
introducing language intended to reference the U.S.
embargo of Cuba.

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Comments
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¶19. This session was better organized than last year and
the CSTD is proving itself capable of its WSIS mandate.
The Secretariat is taking pains to work with the U.S. and
other member states to ensure appropriate CSTD
priorities. As a result, the focus was on topics more
relevant to the CSTD's mission and the balance of speakers
is improving. The meeting and speaker schedules need to
be respected, with more time given for dialogue rather
than prepared statements. The template to submit country
reports proposed for next year should help avoid the
tedium of laundry-list interventions.

¶20. The U.S. delegation remains concerned over the balance
in the CSTD's mandates. The facts that so much discussion
time is devoted to WSIS, and that some delegations are
WSIS-focused, contribute to neglect of the science and
technology component of the mandate, which the U.S.
considers a priority.

¶21. The CSTD meeting came at the end of several weeks of
clustered WSIS events. How all the WSIS action line
agencies, the Internet Governance Forum and the CSTD
relate and coordinate is not clear. The general feeling
is that there need to be shorter, more coordinated and
focused WSIS action discussions before the CSTD meeting.

¶22. The U.S. delegation to the CSTD intercessional meeting
in Santiago, Chile in November 2008 will promote these
objectives.
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